United Nations S/PV.8025

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8025th meeting
Wednesday, 16 August 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni
	Ukraine	Mr. Mialkovskyi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/640)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-25880 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/640)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Tanin is joining via video-teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/640, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: This quarter was dominated by the holding of an early general election in Kosovo, and ensuing lengthy negotiations, deal-making and bargaining to form a new Government. As we meet today, these discussions are still in progress. At the outset, allow me to make a few observations about this process.

First, the decision to call an early election was a deliberate one. A broken unity of understanding brought an end to the ruling coalition; however, those parties that sought a more decisive majority may have fallen short of their expectations.

Secondly, the transition phase has proved to be very challenging. The main coalition was unable to achieve an outright majority. Some parties improved their share marginally, while the long-standing opposition gained significantly. As a result, we see a shift in the configuration of the political landscape of Kosovo, one of the most significant in many years. One factor that may have contributed to this shift is a tidal wave of change in the mind of many voters, particularly the younger generation, for whom jobs, access to education and economic opportunities, reducing corruption and strengthening the rule of law were prominent concerns. Ethno-nationalist rhetoric appeared less effective to galvanize the majority of the electorate into action than in the past. The new political environment after the election is obviously affecting all parties positioning themselves for municipal elections, due to take place in October.

Thirdly, there is no doubt that the election was generally free, fair and competitive, despite the very short preparation time and campaign. The official European Union (EU) observer mission noted this, while at the same time also mentioning the longstanding issues of updating the voting lists and ensuring the enfranchisement of voters outside of Kosovo. We recognize the important contribution of the EU observer team and other observers during the election, and also wish to highlight the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in facilitating the vote in northern municipalities and providing technical assistance to the Central Election Commission. Importantly, there was no significant dispute of the results.

The overall turnout was 41 per cent. While this is not dramatically different from the 2014 elections, it was notable that many new voters participated, with variations across Kosovo, ranging from below 30 per cent in some districts to above 60 per cent in others. In Serb areas, the turnout was the highest recorded in recent times. We should remember that Kosovo Serbs have evolved from a position of boycotting Kosovo elections to partial participation to active participation.

The election did not generate a momentum for change in the participation of women. While political entities observed the gender quota under the electoral law, women's representation in leadership remained

limited. There are no female candidates for Prime Minister and few mentioned as likely in a future cabinet. Women's representation in electoral bodies also remained low, constitutinhg only 9 per cent of Kosovo's Central Election Commission members.

Fourthly, perhaps the greatest concern is that the election process itself consumed the energy of institutions during these past three months. In fact, a functional institutional vacuum has hampered progress on a full panoply of governance priorities. Important economic and social opportunities were missed during the period, for example, from the resources that continue to be available through the European Stabilisation and Association mechanism. In late July, the International Monetary Fund cancelled the final instalment of its two-year funding arrangement in the absence of a fully-authorized Government to complete its review. According to Kosovo's Central Bank, foreign investments during this past year fell by nearly two-thirds. The climate of political uncertainty during the last quarter is tied inextricably to these facts.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to another important development in the region — the initiative of President Vučić of Serbia to launch an internal dialogue on Kosovo, a matter I had the opportunity to discuss with him and with First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dačić last week in Belgrade. On 24 July, President Vučić expressed publicly that for Serbia's progress to be constant and sustainable, the Serbs should endeavour to resolve the Kosovo issue and avoid leaving "this greatest of burdens" to the next generation. He also warned that if the historical conflict between Serbs and Albanians were not resolved, it would represent a joint failure of both, and that the effort required a "long, complicated and often painful process". Kosovo Foreign Minister Hoxhaj welcomed the statement, while Albanian Prime Minister Rama also expressed his respect for this initiative, reiterating that a lasting solution for Kosovo would be "in everyone's interest".

As history teaches, pursuing fair, difficult and often painful compromise demands strong leadership. It should be clear that such leadership is required on the part of all if we are to reach lasting peace, in the interest of all who live in the Western Balkans region. I stress "the region" because peace and stability in Kosovo are interwoven with peace and stability in the region and the normalization of relations between Pristina and Belgrade. As we all know, the problems are regional in nature and so, therefore, must be the solutions.

As outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/640), progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue has been slowed not only by political processes, whether in Belgrade or in Pristina, but also by the partial implementation of agreements that were achieved more than four years ago. On 3 July, European Union High Representative Mogherini hosted a meeting between the Presidents of Serbia and Kosovo with a view towards moving this process forward. If serious negotiations over long-term interests remain the order of the day, it should be expected that, with political clarity in Pristina, the dialogue can resume as soon as possible, not simply to implement the main agreements reached so far but also to advance negotiations for the benefit of both sides.

During the reporting period, the 2017 Western Balkans Summit also took place in Trieste, Italy. It was the fourth annual summit within the Berlin process, itself designed to further European integration for all the Western Balkans States. The process reinforces the inherently regional nature of the issues most directly affecting the future of Kosovo. Possibilities for developing a common market, expanding infrastructure and dealing better with region-wide problems and challenges were all on the agenda.

Political reconciliation by itself cannot overcome all divisions. It must be accompanied by societal reconciliation and by rebuilding trust and cooperation at all levels. Working to help foster greater trust among communities is one of the main priorities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We are continuously exploring how the Mission can better contribute, within our existing mandate, towards improving intercommunity relations. We do this together with governmental, non-governmental and international partners.

Obviously, rebuilding trust is not an event but a long-term process of transforming mistrust into coexistence and, ultimately, genuine cooperation. Wherever we are able, we are focused on promoting new cooperative activities among municipal and community leaders and institutions, supporting the work of energetic local actors. I would like to highlight some of our most recent initiatives to enhance intercommunity trust-building.

At the end of June, I co-hosted, with High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al

Hussein, an international roundtable in Geneva to bring attention back to the many unresolved cases of persons missing from the Kosovo conflict. This continues to be a significant obstacle to societal reconciliation. Within this framework, we have managed to strengthen the involvement and participation of the missing persons' family representatives and to advocate for far-strengthened commitment from the Pristina and Belgrade delegations, as well as the reinforced support of the international community, particularly the United Nations, to determine the fate of the 1,658 persons still unaccounted for.

Also in June, our mission hosted the first United Nations Kosovo Youth Assembly, attended by over 140 young leaders—60 percent of them women—representing all of Kosovo's ethnic communities. The event was the result of close cooperation with UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the OSCE, the EU and the Kosovo Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. It demonstrated the vibrancy of Kosovo's civil society and presented a prominent public picture of the progress that can be made. Based on resolution 2250 (2015), participants developed a road map on youth, peace and security for Kosovo, which also addressed young women's empowerment, to help serve the wider strategy being developed by the Kosovo authorities.

UNMIK remains active in its engagement with municipal Governments, among which I can say that strong efforts are being made to tackle the matters of importance to their constituencies. At the end of July, we facilitated a meeting among 10 municipal leaders in the south-eastern part of Kosovo, led by the Mayor of that region's largest municipality. Many practical issues were debated, including economic cooperation and the particular exposure of that region to radicalization and the dangers of extremist ideology. We will be developing similar initiatives in other areas of Kosovo during the coming months. Our efforts to strengthen intercommunity trust-building are aimed at very practical levels, not only building on existing frameworks but also working to innovate new ones based on the particular concerns of local communities.

Kosovo has continued to make steps towards demonstrating its commitment to justice and the rule of law in the international sphere. After a series of final legal steps, including the approval of its rules of procedure, on 5 July the Specialist Chambers, a mechanism to tackle some of the most difficult and painful post-war chapters, became operational in The Hague. It is now ready to receive filings and indictments, with full cooperation from all the relevant Kosovo institutions.

After three months of an election campaign and post-election uncertainty, it is important for Kosovo to move forward seriously and responsibly, and for the international community to work together to continue to provide essential support. In that spirit, we will continue to engage with all of our partners towards our common goal of promoting peace and stability.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his important briefing to the Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his engagement in the realization of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under resolution 1244 (1999), and to the members of the Security Council for the attention they accord to this issue on a continuous basis.

In view of the exceptional importance that Serbia attaches to the work of UNMIK, I would like to point out the significance of the recent adoption of the Mission's budget as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, as well as the initial proposal of the secretary-General to increase the budget. That adoption reflects the realistically assessed need for ensuring adequate staff and financial capacities to the Mission so that it can meet the needs associated with the implementation of its mandate. At the same time, the strengthening of UNMIK sends a powerful message on the importance of the mandate and the role of the United Nations as the overarching international presence in Kosovo and Metohija.

Bearing in mind UNMIK's substantial and long-term role in building and maintaining stability in the province, as well as the need for its adaptation and strengthening following the reconfiguration of other segments of the international presence, I expect this trend to continue in the future. I trust and believe that it will have a positive effect on ensuring a comprehensive and more deliberate approach on the part of the Mission with regard to assessing and resolving a whole range of problems facing the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in the realization of their fundamental

rights and in promoting the still very fragile security and rule of law in the province. In view of the sensitive environment in which it operates, it is evident that the Mission often refrains from criticizing the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo and Metohija in stronger terms. Regrettably, the even-handed approach in its reporting did not contribute to the Institutions taking more constructive positions.

In the context of the contribution to be made to the creation of conditions for unimpeded implementation of UNMIK's mandate and to support the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, I would like to underline that the continued convening of Security Council meetings to discuss this issue every three months is of key importance. Regular quarterly reporting and UNMIK's ever-more visible presence in the field can have only a positive impact on the strengthening of trust and the readiness of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities to become involved in the processes initiated by the Brussels dialogue.

By and large, the reporting period behind us was marked by electoral activities, and therefore a substantial part of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/640) was devoted to the electoral process in Kosovo and Metohija. Noted during the reporting period were pressure and intimidation brought to bear on the Serbian community. That went hand in glove with threats to the security of the members of that community, aimed at breaking the unity of the Serbian voting bloc. However, such practices received inadequate coverage in the report before us. Nonetheless, it is with satisfaction that I note that the success achieved by the Serbian list in the elections has confirmed the political unity of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, which is a guarantee that the constructive policy with respect to the protection of their interests will be continued.

The current stalemate in the formation of Pristina institutions, however, gives us cause for concern, especially with regard to the continuation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. In that connection, the statement of Ramush Haradinaj, one of the candidates for "Kosovo Prime Minister", made upon his return to Kosovo and Metohija from France, in which he threatened, speaking to "enemy Serbia", that "we will do to them far worse than we did back then" is particularly worrisome. I call on the international community and the judicial institutions in Kosovo and Metohija again not to remain silent in the face of hate speech and the threats to ethnically cleanse the remaining Serbs. We are reminded in the present report, just as we were in the previous one (S/2017/387), of the inflammatory statements made by Albanian political leaders regarding the creation of the so-called greater Albania. They pose an added threat to the process of reconciliation and the normalization of relations.

Alongside the unacceptable unilateral acts of, and the attachment of conditions and caveats by, Pristina, such as the resolution on the suspension of the dialogue and making its continuation contingent upon the fate of those charged with the commission of the most heinous crimes against the Serbian population, the threats are aimed at increasing tension and postponing compliance with obligations assumed under the agreements already achieved. Serbia welcomes each and every appeal by the international community in favour of renewing the dialogue, including the call by the Secretary-General addressed to both sides to resume the dialogue and provide new impetus to the process. Yet I cannot but note that they cast a pall of relativity over the responsibility of the Pristina side, which was the one that broke off the dialogue unilaterally in the first place.

Notwithstanding numerous obstacles and challenges, Belgrade continues to take part in the dialogue constructively, responsibly and devotedly, with the aim of solving the outstanding issues in a status-neutral framework and contributing to the stabilization of the situation and the creation of conditions for unimpeded progress by the Western Balkans region towards European Union (EU) membership. It is noted in the report that limited progress has been achieved on the technical aspects of the dialogue, and in the implementation of the telecommunications agreement specifically, in which the Serbian side again demonstrated its readiness to fulfil the obligations it assumed. However, the other side continues to lag behind and refuses to implement the agreement on the community of Serbian municipalities and the judiciary, even though the agreement on the establishment of the community forms the central part of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations and is the key to the survival of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija.

In fact, I was the one who signed the Brussels Agreement, along with Hashim Thaçi, four years ago. In those four years, we have not put into practice what we agreed to, that is, the formation of the community of Serbian municipalities. How long are we going to

wait for that to occur? I know that 1 million reasons can always be found to avoid fulfilling the obligations already undertaken. But four years is too long to argue about not doing it; it is better to say, "We do not want to implement the Brussels Agreement". In that context, I expect the Council's objective view of the situation, and not a case where the situation is defined in relative terms, whereby it is said that all sides are guilty for not implementing what has been agreed upon. Serbia will fulfil everything signed off to in the Brussels Agreement. I was the one who signed the Agreement.

The unilateral acts that Pristina adopts repeatedly, like the recent directive banning the use of Serbian passports issued by the Coordination Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia to enter and exit Kosovo and Metohija, is also noted in the report. That is yet another piece of evidence, which has been provided time and time again, that the constructive and responsible approach by Belgrade within the dialogue and the implementation of the agreements reached thus far is continually met by Pristina's obstructionism and lack of political will to work towards achieving genuine progress in the normalization of relations. That position of the Pristina institutions is a clear signal to the Security Council, the European Union and the international community for them to bring strong pressure to bear on Pristina so as to make it fulfil the obligations that it has assumed and finally establish the most important element of the normalization of relations — the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. The prevention of the establishment of a Kosovo army of Kosovo was a clear indication that Pristina does heed the suggestions of the international community.

The unilateral suspension of the dialogue by Pristina concerning the electoral process and the intensification of the nationalistic rhetoric by Albanian political leaders accounted for the lack of progress within high-level dialogue during the previous reporting period, as well. The hope that the continuation of the dialogue will be possible was recently raised by the statement made in the wake of the informal meeting between President Aleksandar Vučić and President Hashim Thaçi with EU High Representative Federica Mogherini on 3 July to the effect that it has been agreed to work on starting a new phase of the dialogue and that it is important to implement the agreements reached thus far. Moreover, I would like to add that Belgrade invested much effort to ensuring that the dialogue was successful, and Mr. Tanin and the Secretary-General, in his report, also mentioned that the relation between the Serbs and Pristina's institutions changed substantially through Serbian participation in the elections. They participate in governance and the exercise of power.

We wonder why the Government has yet to be formed in Kosovo, since the elections have already been completed. The Serbs are therefore not the problem in that regard. The problem originates from the great political instability in Kosovo and Metohija. Seen from the point of view of the Serbian side, I do not know how to judge the various statements made by the candidates for Prime Minister concerning Serbs and Serbia, but Serbia will continue to play a constructive role. As the Government remains to be formed, we face a situation in which everything that has been agreed to in the Brussels Agreement is once again deferred. I therefore reiterate that it has been four years since the signing of the Brussels Agreement.

I must underline once again that there can be no genuine reconciliation unless all crimes, without exception, are tried and responsibility is taken for war crimes committed by perpetrators in one's own ranks. The fact that no legally valid sentence has been adjudicated yet for the killing of 1,000 Serbs in the period since the end of the conflict demonstrates that the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija is unable to carry out that task. That justice is hard to come by for the Serbian victims in Kosovo and Metohija is evidenced by the recent shocking acquittal of all those indicted for war crimes in the *Klecka* case and the decision of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo to uphold the appeal and acquit Sami Lushtaku, a former member of the Drenica Group of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a prominent member of the Democratic Party of Kosovo and the mayor of the mayor of Skenderaj/Srbica municipality, who was initially sentenced to 12 years of prison for war crimes in the *Drenica I* war crimes case.

Furthermore in acquitting Lirim Jakupi, also known as "Commander Nazi", the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija showed once again that it is a tool in the hands of politicians. Such instances are just another indication that there is no intention to stop the practice of covering up and relativizing crimes committed by the members of the terrorist KLA in the Serbian southern province during the conflict in the name of the aggressive expansionist cause of a Greater Albania. I also take this opportunity to remind the Council of the monstrous massacre of Serbian farmers in Staro

Gracko, when 14 people — the youngest of whom was barely 17-years-old — were brutally killed 18 years ago on 23 July 1999. The perpetrators of that heinous crime have not been found, and the decision to cease investigation eliminates the possibility of them ever being found at all.

Let me also remind members of the Council that 14 years ago on 13 August 2003 Serbian children were gunned down on the Bistrica river. Ivan Jovović and 13-year-old Pantelija Dakić were killed while four other children were gravely wounded. The frightening massacre in which innocent children were killed only because they were Serbs was committed so as to send a message to all remaining Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija that they are not wanted; a message to all those expelled from Kosovo and Metohija to forget about their return; and a message that ethnic cleansing will be completed no matter what. Spilling the blood of Serbian youth on the Bistrica was intended to symbolize the erasure of every trace of existence and survival of the Serbs on the land of their fathers. Moreover, nobody was charged or tried for that horrendous crime.

Genuine democracy is predicated on a society's renunciation of crimes and organized crime in which an independent judiciary must play a pivotal role. However, the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija has shown time and again that it is an instrument in the hands of those who should be the first to bear the brunt of the long sword of justice. Yet as long as paramilitary clan leaders and the patrons of criminal cartels freely walk the streets in the towns and villages of Kosovo and Metohija, democratization and multi-ethnicity of its society will merely remain a dead letter. A common European future can only be built on the foundations of a genuine renunciation of the criminal legacy irrespective of who the perpetrators and the victims are. It will be possible only when a killer is called a killer in Kosovo and Metohija, regardless of whether the victim's name is Adem, Ivan, Ramush or Pantelija.

The message conveyed by the decisions to acquit terrorists and perpetrators of gruesome crimes is that justice is unattainable for the Serbian and Albanian victims of the terror of the so-called KLA, and that Kosovo and Metohija Serbs are dispensable. At the same time, that is telling evidence that the international community has failed to establish in Kosovo and Metohija a society based on the rule of law. In addition to the aforementioned acquittals, the report of the Secretary-General accords considerable attention to numerous systemic shortcomings of the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as to its inability to take on and win over the political muscle of the former leadership of the KLA.

Let me recall that, in a memorandum issued following his most recent mission to Kosovo and Metohija, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights also stressed that, 18 years since the end of the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija, thousands of people continue to wait for justice and that it is high time that conditions be established for effectively trying war criminals, facilitating the return of internally displaced persons and for clarifying the fate of missing persons. Such assertions are a testament to the fact that Kosovo and Metohija institutions are far from the standards of an independent judiciary and unable to try war crimes committed against the non-Albanian population in a credible and impartial way.

In view of the fact that the Specialist Chambers established to try war crimes are now fully operational and that there are no legal obstacles to bringing indictments, I expect that all those suspected of committing war crimes against the Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija will be credibly indicted and that witnesses will be accorded proper court protection. Serbia stands ready to provide all necessary documentation and evidence on brutal multiple rapes, torture and savage killings by the members of the KLA.

Serbia is fully committed to safeguarding peace. Its primary interest is to save lives and property for the residents of Kosovo and Metohija and create conditions for the sustainable return of internally displaced persons. Regrettably, the ethnically motivated attacks on Serbs, such as the recent setting on fire of the cars of Dragiša Milović and Oliver Ivanović, which continue unabated, obstruct the return of internally displaced persons in any significant number. These incidents are a consequence of the unending increase of tensions through hate speech and a lack of a systematic response by the Kosovo institutions to numerous security and initiative problems facing non-Albanian communities. They reflect the non-existence of a genuine will to create conditions for security and a sustainable life together in Kosovo and Metohija.

The data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the first half of 2017, which has recorded only 218 voluntary individual returns of the members of minority communities, are

self-defeating, to say the least. It is clear that the failure by the police to classify the ethnically motivated crimes as such as well as the lack of systematic monitoring of the situation in this area do not contribute to increasing the number of returnees, nor does the international institutional discrimination of the Serbs, which is manifest in arbitrary arrests, ethnically motivated restrictive measures and the constant violation of basic rights.

We therefore appreciate the activities of the Head of UNMIK aimed at establishing contact with municipal authorities and community representatives for the purpose of protecting community rights, promoting reconciliation, building intercommunity confidence and ensuring the return of internally displaced persons going forward. I propose that greater attention be accorded in the next reports to the question of widespread and pervasive threats to the human rights of the non-Albanian communities, in particular of the most vulnerable, returnees, inter-ethnic and mixed communities within Kosovo Metohija, which are exposed to unrelenting intimidation campaigns.

My statement is also a call to intensify programmatic activities, maximize projects, build confidence and improve the current situation. Of key importance is the full implementation of UNMIK's mandate, including the application of the rule of law, human rights, reconciliation among communities and the return of internally displaced persons. The challenges are many in these areas, as is evidenced not only by the quarterly reports of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK, but also by the aforementioned memorandum of the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner and his visit to Kosovo and Metohija last February. In his report, the Commissioner expresses, inter alia, serious concern that 18 years after the end of the conflict, the ethnic lines of division as well as numerous obstacles to voluntary returns of internally displaced persons are still very much in evidence. In that context, it is necessary that all actors involved in the solution of the issue of internally displaced persons recommit themselves to working zealously to create conditions for their return, which needs to be unimpeded and sustainable in the long run. Indeed, this is one of the main elements of UNMIK's mandate.

Institutional violations of rights are also seen in the area of the protection of the Serbian cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. In that connection, I recall the public condemnation by the Special Representative of the European Union, in which he called on the Kosovo authorities to respect the rule of law in terms of enforcing the judgment of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo that upheld the Visoki Dečani monastery's ownership rights to 24 hectares of land surrounding it. The report of the Secretary-General recounts multiple breaches of law, disregard for judicial institutions and their decisions, refusal to cooperate with representatives of the international community and violation of the rights of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its faithful. Civil society organizations expressed concern about contravention of the law on the special protective zone for the historic centre of Prizren.

I take this opprorunity to call on the international community to step up its efforts to provide physical and legal protection to the monuments of the Serbian cultural and religious heritage that continue to be plundered, damaged, set on fire or destroyed, including the destruction and desecration of numerous Orthodox Christian cemeteries, reported extensively by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo and Metohija. Pristina's expressed intention to resubmit its request for admission to UNESCO is therefore hard to understand, in the least.

I would like to point out that these unilateral acts violate the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1244 (1999), while Pristina's efforts to join various international organizations have a negative effect on the continuation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, which is currently at a delicate stage. The most recent example is the request by Kosovo for admission to INTERPOL, which cannot be interpreted as an effort to promote its capacity to combat crime and terrorism and create institutional preconditions for inclusion in the exchange of information within the INTERPOL purview, especially since this capacity is already available through the UNMIK Liaison Office. Further, there is a special department within UNMIK for dealing with these issues. The request is just another push by Pristina to promote its unilaterally declared independence through the abuse and politicization of the work of international organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the positive results achieved in the dialogue demonstrate that there is no alternative to dialogue. The results also demonstrate that stronger mediation leadership is needed to ensure that agreements reached so far are implemented. The indicated commitment to starting a new phase of the dialogue at the highest level and to bringing new impetus

to the dialogue will require a genuine resolve by both sides towards working to achieve a compromise; such resolve has so far been missing on the part of Pristina. It will also require a different kind of thinking, so as to avoid agreements being misunderstood as a defeat for one side or the other.

Serbia is firmly committed to the dialogue intended to promote regional stability. However, it is of paramount importance that the dialogue be based on mutually acceptable solutions to all outstanding issues, without prejudice to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija and with full respect for resolution 1244 (1999). We believe that a serious and credible approach is needed — one that will be courageous and realistic, as well as forward-looking, as exemplified by President Vučić's initiative to launch a country-wide dialogue on Kosovo and Metohija.

Finally, as I expect that Ms. Çitaku will offer information to document stories about genocide, ethnic cleansing and everything else that she talks about, in order not to have to reply to her later I should like to ask the Secretary-General and Special Representative Tanin that in their future reports they not forget the persecuted and exiled citizens of Kosovo and Metohija. What does it mean that they do not mention this aspect anymore? Since 1999, 18 years later, only 1.9 per cent of internally displaced persons have returned to Kosovo. What does this mean? They were once exiled, but nobody mentions that fact any more. They had not been a colonial Power there; they had lived there for centuries. As is well known, the first capital of Serbia, the town of Prizren, is located there. All our monuments are protected under the United Nations. I say to Ms. Çitaku that it is not all right to laugh now, but if she can prove that there is a single monument of hers there and then I will stop laughing at her. Four monuments protected under UNESCO there date back to the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: Visoki Dečani, the Patriarchate of Peć, Our Lady of Ljeviš and Gračanica monastery.

The Serbs have lived there for centuries. More than 200,000 Serbs were exiled and persecuted after 1991. Do Council members believe that we should not mention this anymore? Do they believe that their exile has become legitimized simply because it actually took place? Is anyone ever going to mention the need of Serbs to return to Kosovo and Metohija? If you do not believe me, Mr. President, or if you think that I am lying, I will tell you that statistics are a very terrible thing. When Ms. Çitaku says that someone committed ethnic cleansing and genocide, that would mean that there are fewer Albanians than before because they werevictims of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

However, according to the data we have, it turns out that Serbs carried out genocide and ethnic cleansing against their own people. According to the 1981 census, during Tito's leadership and not under Milošević, 43,875 Serbs lived in Pristina. According to the 2011 census, which Ms. Çitaku herself compiled, only 430 are left. Where are the other 43,000 Serbs? In the span of 30 years, there were 100 times fewer Serbs living in Pristina. Does that mean that ethnic cleansing and genocide were carried out against Albanians? Were ethnic cleansing and genocide carried out against Serbs or Albanians?

In 1981, there were 18,285 Serbs Uroševac. According to Ms. Çitaku, as the representative of her authorities here, there are now only 32, which is 600 times fewer Serbs. In 1981, there was 17,000 Serbs and Montenegrins in Peć; now, according to Ms. Çitaku's census, there are 332. In 1981, there were 1,898 Serbs in Dajkovce; today, there are only 17. Podujevo is right next to the administrative line with Serbia, and through which the famous Pristina-Nis highway passes. It is where 2,242 Serbs used to live. Only 12 Serbs reside there now, which accounts for 200 times fewer Serbs. Prizren — the town in which I was born — was the capital of Serbia in the fourteenth century. In 1981, there were 11,651 Serbs living in that town. According to the 2011 census, there were 231; now, there are only 27, not 27,000. That amounts to 400 times fewer Serbs. There can be do denying those truths.

Those who committed crimes against Albanians should be prosecuted but please let it not be said that they were the primary victims of ethnic cleansing. The main victims of that atrocity were the Serbs, given the statistics that I have just quoted. Where are those Serbs now? Because they were forced out of Kosovo and Metohija and into exile, are we supposed to forget them? Should they never be mentioned again by the Council? For the Council, does the history of Kosovo and Metohija start on the day of its declaration of independence? That is why I ask that when the Council addresses this issue, please bear in mind all of the facts presented.

I would like to thank the Security Council. Serbia is not against dialogue with Pristina. It is, however,

against unilateral action. Even now, the representatives of Pristina will mention that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo should be brought to an end. Their statement will then be distributed here, as a statement made by a representative of the Republic of Kosovo. Has the United Nations recognized Kosovo? Nonetheless, despite all that I have stated, we would like to engage in dialogue. They will state, however, that there is nothing to discuss. If the issue has been resolved, why do they attend the meetings of the Security Council?

I would also like to issue a warning to all countries that call for Kosovo to be recognized and ask them to bear in mind that this is a question of our territorial integrity and sovereignty. They should be grateful that their own sovereignty and territorial integrity are intact. Those two subjects are too serious to be discussed in clichés. We would like to reach a lasting solution on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, but that will happen only through respect for the legitimate interests of both Albanians and Serbs.

If someone were to show up here and proclaim that, from today onwards, this will be a new State, without the agreement of the country from which the territory is seceding, that would be deemed to be a breach of international law and a violation of that State's authority. It is very clear that the circumstances have changed but a mutually acceptable solution must take into account the rights and interests of both sides.

With regard to Kosovo, it has nothing to do with the right of people to self-determination. Ms. Çitaku is not Kosovar; she is Albanian. As a people, the Kosovars do not exist. The right to self-determination is a right granted to people who are stateless. Her people — the Albanian people — have their own State. This issue relates to a national minority that used to live in the area of Serbia and Yugoslavia, who unilaterally declared a new State. We would like to discuss all of the facts, but we cannot accept that they have nothing to discuss with us. If there is nothing to discuss with us, please do not address any comments to Serbia. A Kosovar Government can then be formed. No one is preventing that. As can be seen, Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija play a constructive role.

I would like to thank the Council for listening to my statement. I wanted to state this in advance because I know exactly what Ms. Çitaku will mention in her briefing because it is all she talks about — a humanitarian disaster, genocide and ethnic cleansing. I just outlined the outcome of the decades-long policy towards the Serbian people. Please bear that in mind because Serbians did not arrive in Kosovo as representatives of a colonial Power. They have lived in that territory for centuries.

This situation could occur in any of the member States represented here, so no one should be hasty in calling for others to recognize Kosovo. That is an insult to Serbia. Serbia is a small country and is certainly not threatening or imposing, but we ask for respect because Serbia, as part of Yugoslavia, together with other Member States — the United Kingdom, France and Russia — established the United Nations after the Second World War, unlike others that fought on the side against which the First and Second World Wars were waged. We remain committed to the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. I am referring not to force and violence but to peaceful means of resolving issues. I believe that we have many common interests and are on the right path to resolving the issues, if there is mutual respect on both sides.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: I am pleased to be here and seeing the Council every three months, but I would like to remind everyone why we are here. On 10 June 1999, the Council adopted resolution 1244 (1999) with the aim of resolving the grave humanitarian situation in Kosovo and providing for the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in the aftermath of a terrible war and a time of ethnic cleansing.

If we try to read resolution 1244 (1999) again for a moment, confusion awaits, since it talks about a country that no longer exists — the former Yugoslavia. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was initially established for a period of 12 months. However, not only has it continued to operate for more than 12 months, today, 18 years later, we are still here because of resolution 1244 (1999) — which, by the way, does not include a requirement that the Secretary-General must report on the Mission every three months.

Let us therefore get real and bring UNMIK to an end. Times have changed since 1999. Kosovo today is free, independent and a sovereign State. There is absolutely no need for UNMIK to be present, because it has no role or function except for some self-invented initiatives that

have been put in place to justify its existence. In terms of budgets alone, since 2009 more than $400 million has been spent to maintain a Mission whose mandate ended years ago. Let us think of the millions of refugees currently all over the world — there are 65 million of them, the largest number since the Second World War. I am sure UNMIK's millions and resources can be put to much better use. It is a shame to use taxpayers' money for repetitive, ill-considered projects. Instead of shrinking its budget and returning its funds, UNMIK has been building and funding permanent solar panels for a rented building in Kosovo. Member States should take action on an issue that has been gone over many times in this Chamber — downsizing the Mission at every level and bringing it to an end.

Furthermore, at a time when the world is facing serious challenges and crises across every continent, we continue to come to New York and take up the Security Council's valuable time simply because our northern neighbour insists on a charade. Just last month, leaders of the Western Balkans met in Trieste to discuss economic cooperation between our countries. Today, Kosovo is an equal member in the forums and meetings of the Berlin Process. When we meet in Berlin, Vienna or Paris, Serbia and Kosovo sit at the same table as equals, as two States. Serbia has no problem when it sees our flags standing next to each other.

So the question is why Serbia insists on asymmetry in this forum here. Why is this dichotomy being tolerated, when it is clearly being misused to project an image that does not match the reality? In fact, let us try to guess what would happen tomorrow if today's meeting did not take place. The answer is — nothing. I know that. My colleagues from Belgrade know that. We all know that. From our point of view, it is not only unnecessary but irresponsible for us to come here and bother the Council with useless debates at a time when its attention is needed to address real challenges and problems in which the United Nations has an important role to play.

In the meantime, on 11 June Kosovo held democratic elections for the third time since its independence. They were the most successful, competitive and peaceful that we have held to date. The turnout was especially high among the Serbian community. International observers noted that Kosovo's parliamentary elections met the highest international standards, except in northern Kosovo, where local Serbian leaders faced pressure and threats, often from the Serbian State itself.

Like all democracies, in the wake of the elections we are now creating a Government. As we speak, the parliamentary constituent session is meeting in order to reach the necessary quorums for electing its various bodies and, later, the Government itself. Despite their obvious differences and disagreements, all the political parties in Kosovo share a common objective, that of Euro-Atlantic integration. On that issue, the Council can rest assured. While our path towards membership in the European Union has been settled with the entry into force of our Stabilization and Association Agreement, we are now focused more than ever on starting the NATO Partnership for Peace process.

In that regard, Kosovo's institutions have been working hard, alongside our partners, to conclude the process of transforming our security forces into armed forces. For far too long we have been consumers of security. We believe it is time not only to fulfil our sovereign duty by establishing our own armed forces, but also to contribute to the regional and international security infrastructure. The challenges we face today know no borders, and they demand that we all work together, side by side. Kosovo cannot afford to sit and be a silent observer. We want to be an active participant and to contribute. We were very grateful for the statement that United States Vice-President Pence made two weeks ago in Podgorica at the Adriatic Charter Summit, in which he articulated the support of the United States for Kosovo's full membership in the United Nations loudly and clearly.

For our part, we will do everything we can to convince our Serbian citizens that Kosovo's army will be their army too, and that there is absolutely nothing to fear. I am pleased to inform the Council that we have already started to reap the fruits of our efforts. On 7 July, Kosovo's security forces organized a graduation ceremony for 61 new cadets — 58 Kosovo Serbs and three Kosovo Montenegrins. Today they are active members of the security forces serving in all of its units. So while we will talk to our Serbian citizens in order to address their concerns, we will allow no one to have veto power over that process.

During the past few months, we have had to deal with a very aggressive and unconstructive attitude on the part of our neighbour to the North.

Instead of normalizing relations, Serbia has been creating unnecessary obstacles in different regional and international forums. That includes the violation of

the implementation of other Brussels agreements, some of which have been completely blocked — such as the ones on energy, justice and the recognition of diplomas. Others have been disrupted in different phases of implementation, such as the agreement on cadastre, civil protection dismantlement, the revitalization of the Mitrovica bridge, the revitalization of the main street in North Mitrovica and the full dismantlement of Serbia's parallel structures in Kosovo. Sabotage continues, and of greatest concern is Serbia's duality in pretending to implement agreements and simultaneously continuing to support its parallel structures in Kosovo, including the illegal municipalities in the north and in other parts of Kosovo. Let me reassure the Council that Kosovo, for its part, will implement all agreements reached in Brussels and, in line with recommendations from our constitutional court, we will establish the association of the Serbian municipalities.

We always talk about normalization, but normalization cannot be unilateral. Normalization and reconciliation cannot be achieved at the expense of truth and justice. One of the latest shameful actions from Serbia was banning former Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga from entering Serbia to participate at an event in Belgrade that was meant to boost the dialogue between the two countries. Madame Jahjaga was intended to attend the promotion of a book containing testimony from women that were tortured and raped during the 1998-99 Kosovo war.

Acknowledging the truth about war crimes in Kosovo is the only way for both societies to move forward. Former President Jahjaga was not able to read her speech in Belgrade, therefore I want to read out a part of it here.

> "The stories presented in the book are not only stories of torture and abuse. They are stories of the cruellest form of torture. These are stories of rape used as a tool of war. These are stories of a truth that has been attempted to be concealed, hidden and buried. Over the years, I have met hundreds of survivors of sexual violence during the war, in different parts of my country. Carefully and patiently, I have listened to their stories; I have cried for those who needed me to cry with them, and I have stayed strong for those who needed me to be strong. I have heard the story of a woman from the Drenica region who was gang-raped continuously by Serbian paramilitaries for over six months. I have spoken to a woman in Đakovica whose body was mutilated while she was raped. Just recently, I met the child of a war rape victim who died without receiving the justice she hoped for, for so many years.
>
> "I truly hope that you read this book, share it with your friends and family, ask your Government to punish the perpetrators and call for reconciliation with your neighbours. We shall not let anybody hold us hostage to the past. The victims of these crimes will never be able to find peace unless the perpetrators are brought to justice. This is a precondition for long-lasting peace, good neighbourly relations and a stable future for the next generations. The future of our countries lies in our hands. Let it be a future of reconciliation and peace."

No trial, no allegation, no insinuation and certainly no statements today can change history. The war in Kosovo happened as the world watched, as the Chamber watched. That is why the world decided to take action. Any attempt to rewrite history will fail. The Kosovo Liberation Army is not a terrorist organization. It is the most successful liberation movement in recent history. Sami Lushtaku and Ramush Haradinaj did not travel to Belgrade to fight. They fought in their homes, in their country with the aim of protecting civilians and liberation a nation. Even as we fuel those kinds of fake narratives, it is difficult to imagine how one is being sincere about the past.

Serbia needs to deal with its own past, not only because of Kosovo, as Kosovo has its own path now — we are free, we are independent and that will never change — but for the sake of their children and their future. Denying Kosovar citizens their right to exist as a State because I am Albanian is a notion that I have heard before. There was actually an entire operation to deport us from Kosovo because we were Albanians. Does that mean that I have to go live in Albania?

Kosovo is a State that belongs to all of its citizens — Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Roma, Turks, Bosnians. It belongs to all of us and no one will ever tell me again that just because I am an Albanian I do not deserve to live there. We have lived there for centuries. I am sure the Council is not here to listen to a history lesson, but I invite members to find a book on the subject if they visit during summer holidays. There are many such books, written by professionals

and academics, that tell the story of Albanians in the Balkans.

In the last couple of days, a new debate has been generated in Serbia — one initiated by the Serbian President, calling for a historic deal between Serbia and Kosovo, calling for a compromise. Allow me to state, Kosovo's independence, as declared in 2008, is a compromise. President Ahtisaari's proposal was a difficult and painful compromise. Now, all of a sudden, has the compromise become our position? That will not stand. Renewing the ideas of solutions along ethnic lines is dangerous for the entire region. If we reject multiculturalism and ethnic diversity within our own States, within our own borders, then how on Earth do we plan to exist and coexist in the European Union, much less in an ever-interdependent and -interconnected world?

Allow me to say it loud and clear — Kosovo and its independence are not a temporary project. Kosovo is here to stay, forever. Normalization and reconciliation cannot be achieved through partition and subjugation. This debate does not do justice to what Kosovo is today. I would be remiss not to mention that Kosovo has emerged as a place where young people excel in many fields on a daily basis. Just last month, six youngsters from Kosovo — three girls and three boys from Bonevet, a makerspace — constructed Europe's first teen-built electric car in Gjakova. This extraordinary example of ingenuity not only makes us proud of our youth, but of these teens themselves, who, through their innovations, educate all of us, helping us to become aware of our surroundings and environment.

Dokufest, the biggest cultural event in Kosovo, took place last week in the beautiful city of Prizren. Even though Kosovo — because of the circumstances — did not have a film school for many years, it managed to develop and host one of the top 10 international documentary and film festivals in the world. Each year, Dokufest grows larger and brings people together to work and collaborate with not only the best producers and artists from the region, but from across the world, placing Kosovo where it belongs: on the world stage. As the slogan of this year's edition of Dokufest suggests, the future is not dead for Kosovars. It is very much alive, and this future is alive for all of its citizens: Albanians, Serbs and the rest. It is unfortunate that this Chamber is being misused to promote narratives and to fuel hate in our own domestic audiences.

It is true that some Serbs left Kosovo after the war. In the same way, Serbs left Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia itself. But to wave numbers here that are simply not true is not correct. The only reason why Serbs did not participate in large numbers in the census is because the Serbian Government called on them not to participate in the census. There was a massive campaign on the part of the Belgrade Government, calling on Serbs not to participate in the census. We have the census data, but we agree that it needs to be revised. We also have election data. Who is voting on behalf of the Serbs in Kosovo? The numbers do not add up. In the last election alone we had around 70,000 Serbs voting inside Kosovo, and that was just in the north. So, please, let us be realistic. Come and visit Kosovo, and you will see that this debate here does no justice to it.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni (Sweden): Let me begin by the thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing today. I would also like to thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Dačić, and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements to the Council.

Clear and undeniable progress has been achieved in Kosovo since the end of the conflict, now almost two decades ago. However, building peaceful and prosperous societies requires constant vigilance and unwavering commitment from all political leaders, as well as from the international community that stands with them. We welcome the fact that the early elections in June were genuinely competitive and peaceful in most parts of Kosovo, although we regret the incidents that took place in certain Serbian-majority municipalities. We now look forward to the completion of the constitutive session of the Assembly and the formation of a Government. A new Government needs to swiftly start implementing necessary reforms for the benefit of the people living in Kosovo.

Sweden looks forward to continuing its bilateral development cooperation with Kosovo, as well as its provision of political support for Kosovo's progress in the areas of democracy, human rights, rule of law and sustainable and socioeconomic development for both women and men.

The peoples of Serbia and Kosovo are looking towards a future, together, within the European Union (EU). To that end, the normalization of relations is key. Regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations are crucial for a stable, peaceful and prosperous Western Balkans. Pristina and Belgrade need to re-engage and revitalize the EU-facilitated dialogue. Both parties must implement their respective parts of the agreement, most notably with respect to the dismantling of parallel structures in Serb-majority areas and the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. It is essential that the status issue does not hinder Kosovo on its European path or prevent its membership in international organizations.

Within the framework of the normalization process, women's participation is key to foster sustainable and inclusive peace and stability. We note that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/640) describes that UN-Women, together with the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, organized an expert meeting on conflict-related sexual violence. Sweden would welcome the inclusion, in the next report of the Secretary-General, of reporting on these matters, as well as gender-aggregated data.

The United Nations and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo have made invaluable contributions to bring us where we are today. Present challenges, however, must be dealt with within the framework of the EU integration process, including together with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.

In conclusion, we reiterate our interest in receiving Mr. Tanin's view on the possibility of downsizing further the mission's structure, size and tasks, as well as on the possibility of adjusting the reporting and briefing period from three to six months.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing.

I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, for his statement and take note of the statement delivered by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

As we have said on previous occasions, Uruguay advocates for strict respect for the principle of territorial integrity and for compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) as the legal basis for resovling the situation in Kosovo.

I should like to begin by recognizing the importance of the high-level official meeting convened on 3 July by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, and the commitment of both leaders, which constitutes a first step towards relaunching the dialogue process between Pristina and Belgrade following the pause imposed by the holding of elections in Serbia and Kosovo. We encourage Kosovar leaders to work constructively and advance in the appointment of their authorities. We also highlight the importance of the process of normalizing relations between Pristina and Belgrade and compliance with the commitments already assumed at the international level.

In relation to the tensions and incidents that took place early in the period covered by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/640), we reaffirm once again the rejection of all belligerent rhetoric, incitement to hatred, destabilization and ultranationalist sentiments. On another order, we note with interest the internal dialogue launched by President Aleksandar Vučić on Kosovo. The work of regional leaders in search of beneficial agreements can be helpful to both communities.

Uruguay considers it critical to advance towards reconciliation, respect for minorities and their due integration into society. In that connection, we are concerned by the limitation of freedom of movement of Serb-Kosovar citizens due to the non-recognition of the passports issued by Coordination Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior of Serbia and the difficulties they encounter in obtaining documents in Kosovo.

Moreover, we welcome the establishment in Pristina of a missing persons resource centre — an initiative that benefits Albanians and Serbians alike — and we commend the event held under the auspices of UNMIK and the Office of the High Commissioner to raise awareness of this urgent question. We urge collaboration in the return process for internally displaced persons, the maintenance of policies of reconciliation and respect for cultural and religious heritage, in particular holy sites.

UNMIK is doing important work in the area by promoting safety, stability and respect for human rights. We commend the efforts to that end of United Nations personnel, the European Union (EU), the EU

Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Force, which, inter alia, have been working with UNMIK for some time. We highlight their work with young people, in compliance with resolution 2250 (2015), the conduct of the first Kosovo Youth Assembly, which promoted reconciliation and a vision of the future, as well as the general projects carried out with UN-Women and UNICEF, among other entities. We also appreciate the work of the various organizations on the ground, working for the progress of Kosovo and the normalization of relations among the communities of the region.

Finally, we recognize the statements of the Secretary-General expressing the deep sorrow of the United Nations for the suffering of the inhabitants of the internally displaced camps who have fallen victim lead poisoning, and we welcome the establishment of a trust fund that will implement community-based assistance projects, primarily in North and South Mitrovica and Leposavić/Leposaviq, which will benefit the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his update on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

I also want to recognize the participation of Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku here today.

We congratulate Kosovo on holding successful democratic elections in June, which international observers confirm were free, fair and peaceful, with only isolated irregularities related to voter participation. This is a clear demonstration of Kosovo's democratic maturation. Of note, there was significant turnout in predominantly Kosovo Serb municipalities, highlighting the progress made in integrating Kosovo Serbs into Kosovo's democratic process.

The United States appreciates the United Nations efforts over the past two decades to help Kosovo build multi-ethnic democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. We also appreciate and support the vital role of the European Union (EU) as facilitator of the Brussels dialogue. We call on leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina to continue taking the needed steps to revitalize these talks, to fully implement the dialogue agreements and to normalize relations. Following the elections, Kosovo's leaders must now cooperate and form a Government without delay.

The United States is ready to work with Kosovo's newly elected representatives on our shared agenda, including advancing Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration by normalizing relations with Serbia via the EU-led dialogue process, resolving Kosovo's border with Montenegro to unlock visa-free travel to the EU, undertaking reforms to strengthen democratic governance and the rule of law and foster economic growth, and promoting a multi-ethnic, peaceful and stable Kosovo. As we partner with the Government of Kosovo, civil society organizations and relevant local institutions in this effort, we are pleased that Kosovo's citizens in both the public and private sectors have demonstrated their capacity to work with partners in the international community to address remaining challenges.

UNMIK represents a United Nations peacekeeping success story, but the Mission has long outlived its reason for existing, as we have said before in the Chamber. Given Kosovo's steady and consistent progress and maturity over the years, the United States reiterates its ongoing call to the Security Council to wind down and end the Mission. We are long overdue in taking this step. As a first step, the reporting period for should be expanded to every six months or longer. We also recommend that the Secretary-General provide in his next report an assessment of where budget and staff reductions can be made, with a focus on reducing redundancy, since the Government of Kosovo has long ago demonstrated its clear competency and capacity to govern.

In line with our responsibility to ensure that all United Nations missions are responsive and relevant to the situation on the ground, the Council must take an honest look at Kosovo and recognize Kosovo's significant progress and development. It is hard to justify continuing to support the Mission when we see more urgent and pressing needs for United Nations peacekeeping in other parts of the world. This much is very clear. We have achieved our goals in Kosovo and it is time to wrap UNMIK up.

Lastly, we affirm our support for Kosovo's efforts to develop into a prosperous and peaceful, multi-ethnic democracy, and we continue to strongly support full international recognition of Kosovo and Kosovo's membership in all relevant international organizations, including the United Nations and INTERPOL. We encourage United Nations Member States that have not yet done so to join the more than 110 United Nations

Members that have already recognized Kosovo as an independent State.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Ambassador Zahir Tanin, his comprehension briefing on the latest development in Kosovo. Obviously, Ambassador Tanin, and old colleague, faces a major challenge; but I must say that it is a very worthy duty that is called upon to discharge.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the presence at today's meeting of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić. I thank him and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku for the respective statements, which obviously were laden with a lot of emotion and passion. We respect both of them. The issues are not simple, and therefore, in our view, the need for UNMIK.

Our position on the issue at hand has always been consistent and clear. We reaffirm our support for a peaceful and amicable resolution of all outstanding issues between Belgrade and Pristina in accordance with the Brussels Agreement. We also welcome the ongoing efforts made by the European Union (EU) in facilitating the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. In that regard, we take note of the informal meeting between the leadership of the two sides in Brussels under the auspices of the EU High Representative, and their commitment to work on starting a new phase of the dialogue.

Nonetheless, we understand from the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/640) that there has been limited progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. It is in particular the lack of progress on some of the key provisions of the EU-facilitated agreements, including, among others, on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, that remains a source of concern. That is why we support the call made by the Secretary-General on both parties to re-engage in dialogue and bring new vitality to the process. We hope that the new leadership in both Belgrade and Pristina will do so in a positive and consturctive spirit with a view to addressing outstanding issues and disagreements through peaceful means.

That requires that both sides refrain for actions and statements that could cause ethnic discord, and instead exert efforts to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence conducive to dialogue. Special Representative Tanin was right when he said that political reconciliation must be accompanied by social reconciliation and by rebuilding trust and cooperation at all levels. That is the basis for genuine cooperation. Respect for each other's heritage is of course very vital in that regard. Failure in that area would very much be fatal — that is even more the case with regard to concerns with respect to demographic issues, which the Deputy Prime Minister expressed with passion. In our view, that should draw our attention.

Ethiopia fully supports the work that they United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has been undertaking in discharging its mandate in line with resolution 1244 (1999). The Mission's engagement with municipal authorities and community representatives in support of the efforts to protect the rights of communities and to promote inter-community reconciliation and trust-building is commendable. Its efforts to promote reconciliation in Kosovo through greater youth-engagement in support of inter-community cooperation is also encouraging, as is the effort being made by Kosovo authorities to implement measures aimed at preventing violent extremism and radicalization, by constructively engaging youth and women. It is our hope that UNMIK will continue to promote political dialogue, strengthen community reconciliation and ensure security and stability in Kosovo and the region. We also recognize the significant role of the European Union on matters concerning Kosovo, and commend the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the Kosovo Force for their valuable contribution to Kosovo in the area of the rule of law and security.

In conclusion, I would like to say that security and stability in Kosovo and the region will ultimately be assured when there is political will and resolve on the part of both sides. In that respect, we once again encourage both parties to remain committed to dialogue and negotiation with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Tanin, for his briefing, as well as the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

Italy's investment in the stabilization of the Western Balkans has been renewed. Our commitment to supporting those countries along the path they have chosen towards the European Union (EU) remains unwavering. The outcomes of the summit held in Trieste on 12 July under the Italian presidency of the Berlin process attest to the priority we attach to keeping the European perspective in focus and to encourage Western Balkan countries to consistently deliver on their own reform agendas in order to bolster regional cooperation as a conclusive, complimentary step towards their European integration.

We firmly believe that the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is an essential element of that picture and a landmark building block of durable stability and prosperity for the entire region. Against that backdropt, we welcome the meeting between President Vučić and President Thaçi held on 3 July under the auspices of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, who has our full support. We also take note of the internal dialogue underaken by the President of Serbia on the matter and look forward to its development. We urge both Belgrade and Pristina to do their utmost to revitalize the dialgoue, starting with the implementation of the agreements already concluded. I recall in particular the issues pertaining to the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which we will continue to follow closely.

We welcome the conduct of the June election in Kosovo, which took place without major incidents and in line with international standards, as assessed by the European Union election observation mission. We regret the incidents that occurred in certain Serb-majority municipalities during the election campaign. A solid Government must now be urgently formed in order to achieve meaningful progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue and to adopt the policy priorities that are vital for Kosovo, including on financial stability, economic development and the rule of law. We call on all political actors to do their parts to achieve that goal, swiftly complete the constitutive session of the Assembly, appoint a new executive and contribute to establishing a constructive dynamic between it and the new opposition.

I would like underscore the importance of consolidating the rule of law, justice and the fight against corruption — a sector on which Italy is ready to share its experience. The attainment of operational capacity by the Specialist Chamber is a welcome development. It is now important that it receive full cooperation from all parties and accomplished its task. Likewise, protecting vulnerable groups and minorities and respect for human rights are crucial for reconciliation and for preventing radicalization. We appreciate the endeavour of the authorities to uphold them and encourage them to redouble their efforts. In that regard, we also welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to assist the communities that suffered from lead poisoning as a result of their relocation to camps for internally displaced persons in northern Kosovo.

In addition to the bilateral ties of friendship and solidarity that link us to the region, Italy maintains long-standing support for the work of UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which we strongly commend, as well as being a major contributor to the Kosovo Force, whose leadership recently passed to an Italian commander.

With that in mind, allow me to highlight that the Secretary-General has documented all the strides made in Pristina over the years. At the same time, we are also aware of the road ahead and the efforts required to overcome challenges that continue to evolve. We therefore believe that, in coordination with other international actors, in line with the broader review of peacekeeping operations, it is time to make an assessment of the United Nations presence in Kosovo with the aim of adjusting accordingly to the present needs of the country, We look forward to recommendations in that regard. Furthermore, we are open to an extension of the reporting period by the Secretary-General, one that is more adapted to the development of the situation on the ground.

In conclusion, I reiterate our commitment to assist Kosovo and the Western Balkan countries in consolidating their institutions, accelerating their development and intensifying regional cooperation, thereby advancing towards the European Union, which is the real key to their long-term stability. From that perspective, it is paramount to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, which belongs to the past. It is time to look towards the future and building it.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First of all, the Senegalese delegation would like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration

Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for the clarity of his presentation of the report (S/2017/640) of the Secretary-General. We once again would like to assure him of our full support. Our thanks also go to the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ambassador Çitaku, whose statements we have just heard.

Senegal would like to commend the smooth holding of legislative elections on 11 June, which were held without major incident or irregularities. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the local and international stakeholders who made that success possible. Nevertheless, on the heels of those elections, we cannot but regret the low representation of women, as was indicated the report that was just presented to us. We also hope that the current difficulties concerning the formation of a new governing majority will be dealt with swiftly.

The limited progress with regard to the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade facilitated by the European Union is a source of concern for my delegation. We therefore encourage the parties to redouble their efforts accordingly and welcome the ongoing efforts of the European Union in that regard, in particular the high-level meeting held on 3 July in Brussels and organized by Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

We agree with the Secretary-General that another important issue deserves our full attention. In that regard, I wish to address the question of missing persons, which must be an urgent priority and which demands of the leaders of both parties to demonstrate political will so as to give answers to the families who have been waiting for a very long time. My delegation would also like to commend the work carried out in the country to counter threats involving violent extremism. Moreover, in our view, the activities carried out within the framework of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the mandate of which has been extended to 14 June 2018, have been commendable in terms of bolstering achievements in defending and promoting the rule of law and human rights, as well as combating terrorism and organized crime. Furthermore, we welcome the activities of UNMIK in the area of capacity-building with regard to young people, promoting reconciliation, transitional justice, human rights and providing support for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

In addition to encouraging dialogue, Senegal urges all stakeholders to take further steps towards peace and development, in particular by focusing on the full implementation of agreements that have already been reached. In that regard, we reiterate our unreserved support for the joint European Union-United Nations programme aimed at strengthening trust at the community level by protecting cultural heritage, and we recommend strengthening cooperation with regard to sharing information.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its congratulations to, and its full support for, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK. We would also like to commend the constructive work of the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and, of course, the European Union itself, as they are all committed stakeholders constructively involved in promoting peace and progress in Kosovo.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing.

I welcome Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, to the Chamber to deliver his statement. I have also listened very carefully to the statement by Ms. Çitaku.

Resolution 1244 (1995) provides the important legal foundation for resolving the question of Kosovo. All parties should adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and reach a settlement acceptable to all through dialogue and negotiation within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, understands the country's legitimate concerns on the question of Kosovo and appreciates its efforts to achieve a political settlement of the question of Kosovo. Currently, the security situation in the Kosovo region remains relatively stable, although many underlying complex issues remain. China welcomes the continued contact between Belgrade and Pristina and efforts to push the dialogue into a new phase. We hope that the two sides will remain committed to the general direction of a political settlement, resume high-level

political dialogue as soon as possible, continuously implement the agreements already reached and gradually increase mutual trust so as to establish favourable conditions, thereby ultimately resolving differences peacefully.

For the ethnic communities in Kosovo, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence serve the common interests of all and meet the needs of the development and prosperity of Kosovo and other countries in the region. China hopes that all parties will always put the well-being of their people first, take effective measures to protect the legitimate rights and interests of all communities in Kosovo, avoid any rhetoric that might escalate tensions, and safeguard the peace, stability and development of the Balkans. The Security Council should keep its attention focused on the question of Kosovo, and remain committed to promoting its proper settlement.

China supports the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin in discharging its duties in accordance with its mandate and in constructively cooperating with all sides. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will work in close collaboration, make steady headway in improving the situation on the ground and play a positive and constructive role for the early settlement of the question of Kosovo.

Mr. Mialkovskyi (Ukraine): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tanin, for his briefing. It clearly outlines the political challenges in Kosovo following the early legislative elections, as well as the number of issues relevant to the stability and well-being of Kosovo residents. I am also grateful to His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and to Ms. Vlora Çitaku, for their statements.

Ukraine regrets that the political situation in Kosovo remains a matter of concern due to the inability of political groups to reach an agreement on the distribution of posts, which is a necessary precondition for setting up an effective Administration. This stalemate creates unnecessary tensions and could undermine efforts aimed at preserving peace and stability in the region. We call on the leaders of Kosovo to show unity and to prove their readiness to meet the immediate and long-term challenges, including economic development, addressing the energy situation, strengthening the rule of law, relations with Serbia and so forth.

Ukraine also hopes that new authorities will give priority to the implementation of the agreements concluded in the framework of the European Union-led dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, including on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. We encourage the leadership in Belgrade and Pristina to show responsibility and to re-engage in a constructive dialogue to achieve progress in the normalization of their bilateral relations, which is essential for both, but first and foremost for the residents of Kosovo. No nationalistic or divisive discourse will do any good for the region.

Ukraine welcomes the resumption of the high-level European Union-facilitated dialogue and the meeting of Serbian President Vučić with Mr. Thaçi, hosted by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in July. We hope that the agreement reached to start a new phase of dialogue for the normalization of relations and reconciliation will be implemented in the short term. In that regard, we took note of President Vučić's initiative to launch an internal dialogue on Kosovo. We hope that it will soon translate into tangible measures.

We share the concern of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General at the incidents of violence and desecration in various parts of Kosovo. Those crimes point to the importance of intensified efforts aimed at improving the rule of law and the execution of justice. We appreciate the valuable work carried out by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and other international partners in Kosovo in strengthening security and stability. We also commend UNMIK for engaging with local authorities, civil society, youth and other stakeholders in Kosovo to promote intercommunity cooperation, and for building trust and fostering societal reconciliation.

The Mission's support in terms of addressing the issues of protection of human rights, vulnerable groups and cultural heritage, as well as the problems related to missing persons and violent extremism, is both needed and appreciated. Ukraine is convinced that those and other important tasks should remain among the priorities of the reconfigured UNMIK. In that regard, we unreservedly join the calls for starting focused discussion on the reduction of the Mission and for

reconsidering the regularity of the Council's briefings on Kosovo.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia wishes to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. I would also like to welcome and thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Ambassador Ivica Dačić. Bolivia also listened with interest to the statement made by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Bolivia reiterates its call for the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), including full respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Serbia. Based on that understanding and pursuant to the resolution, Bolivia considers it important to focus its participation in today's meeting on the following points upon which I will comment in my statement: first of all, the duty of the parties to comply with the commitments they have undertaken in the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue; secondly, the importance of UNMIK's work on easing tensions between the parties; thirdly, enabling the return of internally displaced persons to their homes; and, fourthly, combating impunity.

With regard to the first point, we call on the parties to fulfil the commitments they have made in the European Union-facilitated negotiations. In that context, we are already working towards a peaceful resolution through dialogue, while respecting the need to negotiate in accordance with international law in order to achieve solutions that promote progress and stability in the region. Accordingly, Bolivia urges the parties to comply with what was agreed to four years in the Brussels Agreement on the establishment of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which aims to ensure the security and human rights of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. We believe that progress in fulfilling that agreement is essential to achieve a peaceful settlement between Pristina and Belgrade.

Bolivia values the efforts of the European Union (EU) and supports the initiative of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy with regard to the informal meeting held in Brussels on 3 July, which resulted in the agreement between the parties to start a new phase of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade and acknowledging the importance of implementing the agreements already reached. We believe that these efforts need to be made in order to achieve a lasting peace, keeping in mind that the Serbs and Kosovars could go a long way in resolving their differences by refraining from making statements using bellicose or inflammatory rhetoric. By the same token, we believe that the dialogue facilitated by the European Union is an opportunity to build trust between the parties and find mutually acceptable solutions. This process requires a firm commitment focused on confidence-building measures without excluding the participation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations and other international organizations.

Secondly, we commend the work of UNMIK and its joint efforts with local authorities and representatives of the Kosovo community to protect the rights of communities, promote inter-community reconciliation, establish confidence-building measures and facilitate the return of internally displaced persons, including the organization of the first United Nations Kosovo Youth Assembly, pursuant to resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security. Bolivia values UNMIK's work undertaken in compliance with its mandate under resolution 1244 (1999). We encourage the parties to continue to work together to build trust, maintain good offices, ease tensions and use peaceful measures to promote consensus-based solutions to safeguard peace in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and support political dialogue and respect for human rights.

With regard to internally displaced persons, we take note of the statement issued by the Spokesman for the Secretary-General announcing his decision to establish a community-based trust fund for the benefit of the Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali communities that have suffered from lead poisoning as a result of their relocation to internally displaced persons camps in northern Kosovo. We regret that the return of internally displaced persons to certain areas of the province of Kosovo has continued to be postponed. We call on the parties to cooperate and pool their efforts to assist in this process and ensure the safe return of the displaced to their homes.

Finally, with regard to the special court for Kosovo — the Kosovo Specialist Chambers — we believe that this is a positive step in favour of justice and reconciliation, which represents a key part of Kosovo's challenges. The persons responsible for war crimes should be brought to justice regardless of their

status. It is a moral imperative that all victims should obtain satisfaction when it comes to their right to the truth, justice and redress.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his informative briefing and continued service. I also wish to express appreciation for the statements by First Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku.

Japan commends the largely peaceful legislative assembly elections held on 11 June in Kosovo. At the same time, we are paying close attention to the ongoing difficulty in forming a new Government, two months after the election. Numerous issues lie ahead for Kosovo, such as the need for economic policies to promote job creation and attract foreign investment, as well as foreign policy issues, including the normalization of relations with Serbia and the demarcation of the border with Montenegro. We strongly hope that the major parties will soon form a Government in compliance with the necessary due process.

However, those issues do not warrant being taken up by the Security Council every three months. The Council has spoken at length about the need to adapt mandates to the situation on the ground, and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is a prime example. The most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/640) demonstrates that the risk of violence in Kosovo is far less than in other regions on our agenda, such as Middle East and Africa. A review of UNMIK is required to assess which functions and mandates UNMIK alone can provide. We must address the possible duplication of UNMIK rule-of-law-activities with those of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and consider a feasible reduction in UNMIK personnel. In addition, it is well past time to adjust the briefing cycle, which has remained in place since 1999 despite the substantially different circumstances. A half-year cycle or longer is more than sufficient.

Going forward, reconciliation between Albanian and Serbian communities in Kosovo, as well as the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, ais key. Japan took due note of the recent remarks by President Vučić of Serbia on a final resolution of the conflict, the importance of compromise and the need for an internal dialogue on Kosovo.

Japan strongly hopes that the normalization of relations will be achieved in the near future through sustained and serious dialogue between the two sides. We call on all parties to refrain from provocative ethnic rhetoric, and urge the new Government of Kosovo to promote reconciliation and tolerance, including via the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. Japan also calls on all stakeholders to fully cooperate with the activities of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers.

In conclusion, we are confident that Kosovo will achieve sustained economic development. Kosovo should make further use of its abundant natural resources by facilitating a predictable business environment in order to attract more foreign investment, while also fighting corruption. Japan fully supports Kosovo's efforts and strongly hopes that it will make steady progress towards European integration.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tanin, for his detailed briefing on the recent developments in Kosovo. We also thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Dačić, and Ms. Çitaku for their statements.

The reporting period under consideration was a very active one in the light of the elections held in both Serbia and Kosovo. The recent events have changed the political landscape and configuration of both sides. We therefore encourage the strengthening of confidence-building measures, which are needed now more than ever. We welcome the efforts of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to provide assistance for the holding of peaceful, free and democratic elections. We hope that a similar procedure will be adopted during Kosovo's local elections in October.

My delegation commends the European Union and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Commission, Ms. Federica Mogherini, for successfully hosting a high-level meeting between the two parties on 3 July in Brussels. We view the outcome of that event as advantageous since the leaders agreed to start a new phase of dialogue, which could turn out to be very promising. In that regard, we highly recommend that both sides discuss any new initiatives in order to find a mutually beneficial solution.

Kazakhstan calls on the parties to follow agreements and avoid any nationalist and provocative rhetoric, while focusing on promoting intercommunity

reconciliation and trust, the rule of law and human rights. It is equally vital to implement laws on the use of languages, the protection of vulnerable groups and cultural heritage. Special attention must be paid to the strengthening of the Office of the Ombudsperson, supported by UNICEF.

We see the importance of implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, with the support of UN-Women, and addressing the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. We also need to implement resolution 2250 (2015), on youth and peace and security, and provide full support to the laudable engagement of young people of all ethnicities in promoting reconciliation. Furthermore, we believe that social stability will be achieved only through the full engagement of the United Nations country team, regional and subregional organizations and civil society groups, as well as youth working to achieve sustainable peace.

We therefore underscore the pressing need for further peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation in Kosovo. Peace is achieved if the weakest links in society have their rightful place. We therefore call for improving the conditions for internally displaced persons and members of non-majority communities, through better health services and economic development.

Finally, we encourage the leaders of both parties, as well as the new Administration, to overcome narrow political interests and ethnic divisions and to make meaningful progress towards honouring commitments on economic and political reforms. To that end, it is essential to ensure close cooperation on the ground among Kosovo authorities, the Kosovo Force, the European Union, the OSCE, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Council of Europe and the United Nations system for the full realization of resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Tanin, for his briefing. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Çitaku and Foreign Minister Dačić back to the Security Council.

Today, like others, I will be adhering to the guidance in presidential note 507 (S/2010/507), which encourages Security Council members and non-members to deliver their statements in five minutes or less.

It has been three months since the Council last met to discuss the situation in Kosovo (see S/PV.7940). As the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/640) makes clear, it has been a comparatively quiet period in Kosovo. In June, we saw the successful holding of free and fair elections in the country. While the European Union's election observers noted some voter intimidation and violence in Kosovo and Serb parts of the country, we are pleased that the vast majority of Kosovans were able to carry out their democratic duty peacefully. We now look to all parties in Kosovo to take the next vital steps and form a Government swiftly. The people have spoken. They now expect a Government to get on with the business of governing, getting institutions up and running and returning the country to the path to European integration.

Crucially, that means getting back to implementing the European Union's facilitative dialogue. Progress in the dialogue is absolutely vital for both Kosovo and Serbia. It is the only path to the normalization of relations between those two independent countries. The lines on the map are set; they are fixed. They will not be changed. We should not be distracted by the quarterly angry and excessively lengthy exchanges between Serbia and Kosovo in the Chamber. All that matters are the constructive exchanges in Brussels, such as those between President Vučić and President Thaçi only last month.

Progress on dialogue commitments will also be vital if Kosovo is to continue to improve its standing with international organizations. We will support Kosovo in its efforts to do so. While we welcome our mixed facilitating role between the Kosovo authorities and INTERPOL, we look forward to Kosovo's own independent membership of INTERPOL, so that Pristina can respond directly to requests from partners and so that, together, we can tackle the challenges posed by international crime.

The other notable development since we last met has been the agreement on the United Nations peacekeeping budget. At a time when $600 million was found in savings from the peacekeeping budget, it seems extraordinary that the budget of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) should find itself increasing rather decreasing. What message does that send to the world about the Council's priorities? What is the message it sends when Kosovo gets additional money for solar panels at a time when the Council was able to find savings in our missions in

Darfur, South Sudan and so many other places? That increase in funding is particularly hard to fathom given how peaceful and stable Kosovo has become. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/640) makes clear, there have been comparatively few challenges to security in Kosovo in the past few months. That is something that the recent Kosovo Force report also makes clear, noting that the trend in Kosovo is incrementally positive. We all recognize the important work that UNMIK has done over many years to Kosovo's benefit. But it is time for the Mission to shrink, not grow. In view of that, we are disappointed that its budget has increased this year, particularly in the wake of the numerous calls in the Security Council's previous three meetings for the Mission to be downscaled.

I would like to conclude by echoing the comments made by the representative of Japan, and by reiterating the United Kingdom's long-standing position that it is past time for the Council to meet less frequently on this issue. The number of issues on our agenda only continues to grow. As a Council, we should focus our time and attention on genuine threats to international peace and security. All of us in this Chamber should be thankful that the situation in Kosovo no longer falls into that category.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and for his work as Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I would also like to thank Mr. Dačić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Çitaku of Kosovo for their statements.

Like others, I would like to begin by once again recalling our wish to see the timetable for the Security Council's consideration of the situation in Kosovo reviewed. At a time when the Security Council is dealing with a constantly increasing workload, there can no longer be any justification for maintaining quarterly briefings on Kosovo, whose situation does not compare to the crises where the Council's intensive engagement is essential. We also believe that the positive developments in institution-building in the past few years in Kosovo are grounds for refocusing UNMIK's work and coordinating it with that of other international stakeholders in Kosovo. The current stasis is unsatisfactory given that it is our responsibility, as members of the Security Council, to ensure that United Nations efforts are fully adapted to the situation on the ground. Unfortunately, that is not the case in Kosovo today.

France welcomed Kosovo's recent peaceful holding of parliamentary elections in the presence of many international observers. It is another successful element in the country's efforts to build a peaceful parliamentary and democratic culture and another illustration of the considerable progress that has been made since independence. While the elections were transparent and peaceful in most of the country, they were marred by irregularities in places, showing that the electoral system needs further improvement. We also deplore the atmosphere of intimidation and violence directed at some candidates and voters in the Serbian municipalities of Kosovo.

Once the new Government is in place, it should immediately resume the implementation of the reforms that are vital to Kosovo's future: strengthening the rule of law — a sine qua non for European integration — economic development and full implementation of the European reform agenda. It is equally crucial to ensure that the political parties that are not part of the new Government engage in constructive opposition and embrace a spirit of compromise. After the episodes of tension that erupted between Belgrade and Pristina in the past few months, we expect all stakeholders to work harder than ever to show responsibility and restraint. The resurgence of nationalist discourse, sometimes coloured by community references, is a danger to the stability in the region that the peoples of both Kosovo and Serbia desire.

France firmly believes that Kosovo's future should no longer be a priority for the Council but that it belongs in the framework of a political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina conducted under the auspices of the European Union. The European Union is very clear on this point. European integration for both countries is conditional on the normalization of their relations with each other. In that regard, it is important that they demonstrate goodwill and proactive commitment at the highest levels. Beyond simple declarations of intent, we expect all the agreements concluded in 2013 and 2015 to be put into effect as soon as possible, including that on the establishment of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which is a key element in their dialogue.

We welcome the mediation efforts that the European Union and its High Representative for Foreign Affairs

and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, have been making since the beginning of the year, and we hope that the meeting on 3 July of Presidents Thaçi and Vučić will genuinely revitalize the dialogue. We urge the Kosovo and Serbian authorities to intensify their efforts to achieve more concrete results in this area in the next few months. All sides must do their part by adopting a constructive attitude and refraining from any unnecessary provocations that could endanger the stability of the region.

Lastly, a continued effort to consolidate the rule of law in Kosovo must remain a priority. It is a very firm European requirement, one that we support, and there is still a great deal to be done where strengthening administrative capacity and justice and combating corruption and organized crime are concerned. It also involves fighting radicalization in all its forms, and we welcome Kosovo's unconditional commitment in that regard, both locally and as part of the international coalition against Da'esh.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and share his serious concerns about the situation in Kosovo. We thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and his team for their work and for their objective briefing on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The assessments we have heard show that the area continues to have serious, major problems that require urgent solutions as well as the attention of the international community. Needless to say, we also listened attentively to Ms. Çitaku's statement.

Today a number of delegations painted a delightful picture of events that does not jibe with our appraisal, which I will share with the Council, if I may. The Kosovo project continues to reveal its flimsy foundations. There was new proof of the dysfunctionality of Kosovo's artificially created institutions in the eruption of an internal political crisis there, as a result of which the winners of the extraordinary parliamentary elections of 11 June have been unable to get any work done for more than two months. It appears that the politicians in Pristina, with no fear of accountability, are defaulting on the commitments they made in the framework of the Brussels dialogue. There has been no movement whatever to settle the fundamental question of the creation of a Serb-majority community of municipalities in Kosovo, which was agreed on as long ago as April 2013. We urge the European Union mediators to intensify their efforts to resolve this issue so that the crucial guarantees of the rights of Kosovo Serbs and the area's other minorities can finally be assured.

The problems related to the protection of Serbian religious and cultural heritage are as critical as ever. We are concerned about the fact that physical attacks against Serbs continue, arson is committed against their property and there are attempts to prevent refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from returning. There are serious concerns as well about the ongoing attempts by the Kosovo Albanian authorities to appropriate property belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as problems in ensuring the rights of believers. In that regard, we would like to draw members' attention to yet more specific cases of illegal actions by the Kosovo authorities regarding Church property.

For example, the Kosovo Anti-Corruption Agency, which is leasing a building on a plot of land belonging to the only functioning Orthodox Cathedral in Pristina, Saint Nicholas, has not paid rent since November 2013. Arrears now amount to € 400,000 — a sum that the debtors, the Anti-corruption Agency, are not planning to pay. The numerous attempts by the Serbian Orthodox Church to see justice prevail in the municipal administration have led to naught. Neither have appeals to the United States or the European Union. The Serbian Orthodox Church is planning to take the case to court, but even a positive verdict would not necessarily be carried out, in the light of the pitiful state of the judicial system.

Let me give another example. There was a decision ya Kosovo court, where international judges work, which confirmed the property rights of the Visoki Dečani Monastery, which, incidentally, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. However, the municipality leadership is not upholding the ruling, as it apparently runs counter to the interests of the Albanian people. The Kosovo authorities are ignoring the request of the Serbian Orthodox Church to renovate a number of religious buildings, including the Church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina. The Kosovo Albanians are trying to erect an economic blockade against the Serbian Orthodox Church and deprive it of its property and means of existence. Such steps prove that Pristina's policy to build a multi-ethnic society in the province has failed

The Kosovo Albanian Administration is creating obstacles to Serbian pilgrims and IDPs visiting the province. The situation should not go unheeded. Inter alia, in the context of Pristina's considerations of a repeat request to join UNESCO, there is also a regrettable situation with the judiciary in Kosovo. Kosovo Albanians judges are constantly replacing foreign servants of lady justice, and they are subject to political pressure. Often their verdicts are overturned by higher bodies or are returned for further work. The process is drawn out unjustifiably.

There are also serious concerns in the province with upholding the rule of law and combating corruption. The Kosovo Albanian authorities are not respecting agreements on the freedom of movement of Serbian document holders. Pristina considers such documents as void, in particular those issued by the Serbian municipalities in northern Kosovo, and ban their use for moving around Kosovo by forcing people to obtain Republic of Kosovo identification cards.

There has been slow progress in carrying out a full-scale investigation of abuses by the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army and in bringing to justice all of those perpetrators, irrespective of their current status. All the legal obstacles to the start of the work of the Specialist Chambers in The Hague have been eliminated. We trust that soon the Security Council will receive information on initial specific results of its work.

Curbing the spread of radicalism and terrorism in Kosovo is still of relevance. The territory of the province is being used for recruiting fighters to fight in the Middle East alongside extremists and to prepare them for terrorist acts in other countries. We note the confrontational stance of our Western partners in Kosovo towards Russia. How else can we qualify the provocative statements made by representatives of NATO urging the Kosovo authorities to be ready to counter "the hybrid war", which apparently Russia is conducting in order to expand its influence in the Western Balkans. The pronouncements that Russia is apparently seeking to redraw the borders in the Western Balkans are absurd blatant lies and glaring attempts to pit us against the people who are living in the region. Let me remind the Council that in 1999 the United States and its NATO allies conducted a genuine hot war for which nobody has borne responsibility.

The Kosovo Force (KFOR) Commander, Major General Fungo, speaking in the European Parliament, mentioned Russia as a main threat and challenge that Kosovo is encountering, along with inter-ethnic tension, religious extremism and problems with refugees and migrants. Once again, no one has managed to submit any concrete evidence in that connection. Today it seems to have become trendy in some places to accuse Russia without any evidence whatsoever. That is called defamation. For a long time, the KFOR command in Kosovo refused contact with representatives from Russia. We know that recently that was resolved, as Russian representatives were asked to go to the NATO headquarters in Brussels for a meeting with the KFOR command. That is certainly an effective format for discussion that is not trivial

Avoiding contact with the people from a country that is a permanent member of the Security Council runs counter to the KFOR mandate, as stipulated in resolution 1244 (1999). That practice is absolutely unacceptable. We urgently call for an end to the defamation of Russia and its foreign policy line, including in the Western Balkans. Our policy in the region is still based on respect for partners and their interests. We note with regret that the gross imposition of the NATO logic in the region is clearly leading to the destabilization of an already fragile situation in the Balkans. For example, Montenegro has joined the Alliance, despite the opinion of people in the country, who they did not even deign to ask. It took more than two years to overcome the drawn out political crisis in Macedonia that was caused by foreign interference, but this was not Russia, but rather an attempt to overcome the desire of the electorate.

Once again, even though Russia was accused, Russia did not interfere. We see these as attempts to undermine the traditional friendship links between Russia and its Western Balkan countries. We are linked by many centuries of friendship and ties to those people. Imposing NATO policies and trying to draw those countries into the alliance leads to an exacerbation of the manifold political, ethnic, religious and inter-ethnic issues in the Balkans, which are likely to lead to an increase in the potential for conflict in the region.

I turn back to Kosovo. In the current situation, we see no basis for raising the issue of revising the quarterly review and the format for considering the Kosovo issue in the Security Council. There is no room for decreasing the level of the United Nations presence in the province through UNMIK. The United Nations is playing a key, irreplaceable role in Kosovo's

affairs, and UNMIK remains a central instrument for international monitoring and for dealing with issues on normalizing the situation — in line with resolution 1244 (1999), which is still fully in force. As for the idea of closing UNMIK, we would like to underscore that we are categorically against it. It is unacceptable for the Security Council to be guided purely by financial considerations in making decisions on the United Nations presence in Kosovo. Indeed, it seems to betray a desire to get rid of a structure that is able to provide an objective picture of what is happening in the province. We must not create a virtual reality and try to put a positive spin on a situation that, de facto, since the province separated from Serbia, has only deteriorated.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his very comprehensive briefing to the Council on the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2017/640). Egypt reiterates its full support to him in fulfilling his mandate, and we welcome the key role of the United Nations during the reporting period in helping Kosovo to build its institutions.

We also welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku, and I thank them for their statements.

Political, economic and security developments in Kosovo have a direct impact on peace and stability in the region. Egypt, bearing this in mind, welcomes the fact that success of Kosovo institutions in holding the planned legislative elections and calls on political actors to overcome without delay their differences and to form a new Government, so that they can take on the challenges facing them, push forward with the reform agenda and build on the advances made in the economic and security fields and in the establishment of the rule of law, as reflected in the reporting period. These include accelerating economic growth, reducing unemployment and improving the investment climate in Kosovo.

We express our concern regarding the references in the report to the various serious challenges facing the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue. Egypt believes that the high-level dialogue between the two parties, facilitated by the European Union, is the most appropriate forum for the peaceful resolution of all pending matters, and we urge Pristina and Belgrade to resume this dialogue. Here we welcome the informal meeting held between Presidents Vučić and Thaçi in July in Brussels and the statement by both Presidents on the importance of the implementation of the agreements already reached without further delay.

We also express our concern with regard to the increase in the level of hatred and nationalist and ethnic sentiments, and we urge both sides to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, which only fuels internal tensions and divisions. We call on both sides to show the greatest possible restraint and to avoid taking any unilateral measures or steps that could fuel tensions.

We call on the various parties in Kosovo to follow the path of dialogue and understanding and to strive to deal with all issues in the framework of existing State institutions.

In conclusion, and given the importance that we attach to consolidating peace and stability in the region, we wish to once again reaffirm the importance of the efforts of the international community aimed at helping Pristina and Belgrade to overcome the differences between them and reaching compromise solutions that are just and lasting, that are accepted by both sides and that could lay the groundwork for peace and stability in the region. We also encourage them to speed up regional integration into European institutions, which would improve the situation in the region as a whole.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of Serbia has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Dačić (interpretation from Serbian provided by the delegation): As I said earlier, Ms. Çitaku devoted her time to speaking about the same things she spoke of previously and levelling accusations related to the alleged ethnic cleansing of Albanians. She said she did not speak about false narratives but simply provided specific precise data. I think that she insulted the Security Council, member States and representatives, because she said that this was a charade. I do not know if the Council is ready to accept this statement; I do not have anything against that. I am much more worried about other things: the fact that the United States, the United Kingdom and France have obviously aligned

their position with that of Kosovo concerning the need for the finalization of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

So how is this to be interpreted? You say that you want to be Serbia's partner. Do you believe that it is enough to carry out the secession process and now say, we do not need to speak about this anymore? I posed a question; is someone going to reply to this question? Is anyone ever going to mention here the more than 200,000 Serbs who were persecuted of whose number only 1.9 per cent returned? Do you believe that we should never mention this again?

I was presenting data to the Council from 1981, the year when the protests started in Kosovo and it started to ask for independence and for the status of a republic. Milošević was not in power at the time; it was the time of Communist Yugoslavia. At that time, 43,000 Serbs lived in Pristina. So where are those Serbs today? I mentioned other towns as well. Are you going to say, all right, they are not there anymore, and we will not gather here anymore and talk about it?

All of the large Powers I mentioned have deeply hurt the Serbian people by their conduct, because Serbian victims want justice, just as Albanian and all other victims do. If 1,000 people died between 1999 and today, and no one was accused in that connection, then Serbian victims also seek justice. After all, the United States denies 41 per cent of visa applications from Kosovo. That is official information. If the situation in Kosovo is so good, as Ms. Çitaku says it is, then why are Albanians fleeing Kosovo en masse and going to Europe?

Turning to the Government, the President speaks of peace and his various initiatives. Mr. Mustafa also speaks about various initiatives in three municipalities of central Serbia and says that he has been receiving representatives from eastern Kosovo. So whom are you lying to? You are representing only yourself here today, but in fact you are the people who persecuted hundreds of thousands of Serbs in Kosovo. Of course, I do not mean Ms. Çitaku personally, but there is no need to pretend that this never happened at all.

Ms. Çitaku spoke of the Kosovo Liberation Army as the most successful liberation movement, but it is on the United States list of terrorist organizations. I simply want to ask Ms. Çitaku, when she speaks about this issue, to bear in mind that Serbia is repaying Kosovo's debts from the time of Yugoslavia. Why does she not speak about that? Why not say that she does not want us to repay their loans? A few million dollars have already been paid. In one instance Kosovo is Serbia, and in another it is not.

Anyone who believes that the situation in Kosovo has been resolved is living in a state of deep confusion. One Prime Minister has been accused of war crimes while another is in favour of the unification of Kosovo and Albania. Without going any deeper, anyone who believes that it is enough to declare a unilateral secession to resolve the issue, or that simply recognizing a country is enough to settle the issue, has forgotten history and all that happened in the Balkans over the past century. France and Serbia are strategic partners. We have a signed agreement. How logical is it to make such statements here when we have not spoken about it before?

I do not wish the fate of Serbia on any country. I hope that what has happened to Serbia happens to no country represented here. We will certainly not be the cause of wars. The majority of Albanians from Kosovo participate in the wars of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. There are no participants from Serbia there. If anyone is unaware of that, it would be difficult for someone from the outside to explain it.

If someone believes that meetings like today's should no longer take place, I urge them to make that decision. Let them propose it. Let them propose that resolution 1244 (1999) be revoked and reversed. Who is asking Serbia about it? We know the international situation. We are well aware that such a decision cannot be adopted in the Security Council; that being the case, I would ask certain members not to insult Serbia. Serbia is a proud country that contributed greatly to the establishment and formation of the United Nations, unlike other countries that used to welcome Hitler with flowers. We ended our pact with him on 27 March 1941, and I would urge no one to forget that.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to Ms. Çitaku for a second statement.

Ms. Çitaku: Again, I sincerely apologize for taking the Council's time, but some things should not be left unsaid.

First we are very proud that in our political landscape we do not have descendants of Milošević. We have people, young leaders, who fought Milošević and Šešelj, who were the worst criminals in Europe after

the Second World War. We are proud of the background of our leadership, unlike some others.

Second, this is not the venue to discuss ethnic and national civic identities and how they intertwine. This is not the venue to discuss who was in the Balkans first, who came in the seventh century, where they came from or whom they found there. We can have those discussions if we decide to organize a seminar. Historians can come together. They can fight, agree or disagree. I am ethnic Albanian and a proud citizen of Kosovo, and these identities coexist very well within me; one does not exclude the other.

Third, Kosovo had borders long before it had statehood. We were a federal unit in former Yugoslavia until Milošević came to power, and our borders were set long before we declared our independence.

Fourth, our independence is not a product of a secessionist movement. Our independence is the product of the consensual dissolution of Yugoslavia. It is not only Kosovo; there are also Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. So there is no secessionist movement.

Fifth, as to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, there was a long process of negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, and there was a proposal by former President Martti Ahtisaari for Kosovo to declare independence.

Sixth, there was a ruling from the International Court of Justice, upon Serbia's request, to verify the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence, and the ruling was unambiguous and crystal-clear. Kosovo was within its rights when it declared independence. That is according to the International Court of Justice, not me, and I suggest that Mr. Dačić go back and read it because apparently he has forgotten it.

Seventh, Kosovo is not a perfect place. I am not trying to say that Kosovo is a perfect place. We have lots of problems. We have much more to do in terms of the rule of law, fighting organized crime and corruption and in creating better opportunities for all of our citizens, but these are not challenges unique to Kosovo. One finds these challenges in most of the countries of the Western Balkans. Frankly speaking, Kosovo is no longer even in the top 30 countries in terms of asylum-seekers in Europe. Serbia is way ahead of us. Does that mean that Serbia is a failed country? No.

Again, in terms of Serbians living in Kosovo, I would ask the Council to bear with me for just one minute. These are the Central Election Commission's numbers from this year's elections. In the municipality of Novobërdë, there were 9,617 Serb votes; in Shtërpcë, 13,902; in Ranillug, 5,689; in Partesh, 4,664; in Klokot, 5,689; and in Gracanicë, 21,411. In the four northern municipalities, there were 58,138 such votes. All together, there were 123,774 votes, and we all know that people over 18 vote. So if we have this number of voters, what is the number of citizens? Again, I am not saying that all Serbs were bad, but the numbers that were cited here are simply not real.

Finally, to conclude, I urge everyone to come and visit Kosovo, and they will see with their own eyes what Kosovo is.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.